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ABSTRACT

Created by Dr. Edgar Schein of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the career anchor model suggests that certain motivational/talent/value drives, formed through work experience, function to guide and constrain entire careers; and that such anchors are the source of stability that permits growth and change in other areas. The concept of a career anchor, which focuses not only on what the person wants or thinks is important, but also on what the individual feels he or she is good at, emerged directly from a longitudinal study of a representative group of 44 MIT Management School male graduates who completed their graduate work in the early 1960s. Emerging from interviews with these graduates were the following five career anchors: security, technical/functional competence, managerial competence, creativity, and autonomy. The typology of career anchors plays a significant role as organizations begin to focus on human resource planning and development. Organizational and individual needs cannot be matched without more knowledge about individual life cycles and the interaction of self, family, and career development; the nature of organizational career dynamics; and the interaction of individual and organization. Since the career anchor model may provide a structure for understanding the human component in educational systems, it may help teachers plan their careers better and thus help to alleviate teacher burnout. (MN)

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CAREER ANCHORS: A NEW CONCEPT IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR

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ABSTRACT

A number of researchers are studying the broad area of careers and career development. One model on career development which has drawn considerable attention is the "career anchor" model. The model suggests that certain motivational/talent/value drives formed through work experience function to guide and constrain entire careers. The purpose of this paper is to explain the career anchor model and discuss the implications of the model for the professional educator.

Biographical sketch

Thomas DeLong is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Brigham Young University. He spent 1979 as a visiting scholar at M.I.T. after completing his Ph.D. at Purdue University. He has published in numerous journals and books. DeLong's specialization focuses on organizational effectiveness and career development in the educational sector. He is also interested in the interaction between work and the family.

Career Anchors: A New Concept in Career Development for the Professional Educator

In the past decade there has been an influx of information appearing in books, guides, and journals concerning careers and career development. As more and more educators contemplate their careers and make subsequent career decisions, an ever increasing need has arisen for new and logical models of career development to assist the educator. One model which has drawn considerable attention is the "career anchor" model created by Dr. Edgar Schein of M.I.T.

Schein (1978) suggests that certain motivational/talent/value drives formed through work experience, function to guide and constrain entire careers. These basic combinations of needs, drives, and self image, act, in effect, as "career anchors" that not only influence career choices, but also effect decisions to move from one job to another, shape what the individual is looking for in life, and color his/her views of the future. Schein suggested that although we continue throughout life to gain valuable data about ourselves in regard to our behavior, the first three to five years of work experience are particularly important for our career development and provide the groundwork for future career decisions.

The career anchor model appears to have the potential to serve as a useful information base for either individuals contemplating a career change or for organizations seeking to aid their employees in career planning.

The Origin of the Career Anchor Notion

Schein's "career anchor" model is defined in broader terms than job values or needs. It emphasizes evolution, development, and discovery through actual work experiences. More specifically, the concept of a career anchor tries to focus on not only what the person wants or thinks is important, but also on what the individual feels he "is good at."

The early career can be viewed as a time for mutual discovery between the new employee and the organization; how the employee fits into the organization; how he/she contributes to the organization; how he/she meets needs through the organization; and how he/she interacts and receives feedback from the organization. As the new employee gathers more information about himself/herself, an occupational self-concept develops. This occupational self-concept has three components according to Schein (p. 125):

1. Self perceived talents and abilities (based on actual successes in a variety of work settings).

2. Self perceived motives and needs (based on opportunities for self tests and self diagnosis in real situations and on feedback from others).

3. Self perceived attitudes and values (based on actual encounters between self and the norms and values of the employing organization and work settings).

The career anchor concept emphasizes that until one has encountered a number of real life situations, motives and values will interact with eachother to fit the career options available. An individual may join an organization only to find that the security he/she thought "came with the

job" is in fact non existent. Career anchors are intended to identify a growing area of stability within the person: it may well be that career anchors are the source of stability that permits growth and change in other areas. It should be recognized that the concept is designed to explain that part of your life which grows more stable as we develop more self-insight based on more life experiences.

The concept of career anchors emerged directly from a longitudinal study of a representative group of 44 M.I.T. Management School male graduates who completed their graduate work in the early 1960's. The respondents in the study all returned to M.I.T. ten to twelve years later for indepth individual interviews for the purpose of gathering comprehensive career histories.

Specifically, the 1974 interviews focused on the actual job history of each person and the reason for the choices or decisions which the graduate had made. When Schein examined the stated reasons for the decisions, there emerged in almost all cases a clear pattern of responses. The actual job histories of the 44 alumni differed, but the consistency in the reasons given for career decisions was great. The greater the job experiences the more clearcut, more articulate the alumni were in describing their career history.

Five career anchors emerged from the interviews:

Anchor 1: Security. Individuals with security as their anchor have tied their careers to a particular organization. The implications are that individuals who are "security" oriented will accept, to a

greater degree than the other career anchor types, an organizational definition of their careers. The "security" anchored individuals would look for an organization which provided long run stability, good benefits, and basic job security. The organization man as defined by Whyte (1956) would typify people who are "security" oriented, because in order to remain in the organization, individuals must socialize themselves to its values and norms.

Anchor 2: Technical/functional competence. Technical/functional people are motivated by the challenge of the actual work they do, e.g., marketing, curriculum design, public relations, or some specific educational expertise. Their anchor is the technical field, functional area, or content of their work, not the managerial process itself. The self image of individuals in the technical/functional competence group is tied up with their feelings of competence in the particular area they are in.

Anchor 3: Managerial competence. The fundamental basis for the "managerial competence" anchor is to be competent in the complex activities that comprise the idea of "management." "Managerial competence" oriented individuals perceive that their competencies lie in the ability to analyze problems, remain emotionally stable, and interpersonally competent. Their career experiences would enable them to develop the self image that they had the skills and values necessary to rise to general management levels, i.e. district superintendent.

Anchor 4: Creativity. "Creative" anchored individuals have a need to create something on their own. "Creating" is the fundamental need operating for example, in the entrepreneur. "Creative" oriented individuals

keep getting into new ventures and trying their hand at new kinds of projects. They are also very central and visible while working on projects.

Anchor 5: Autonomy. The "autonomy" anchor encompasses those who have found organizational life to be restrictive, irrational, and/or intrusive into their lives. They are primarily concerned about their own sense of freedom and autonomy. "Autonomy" oriented individuals are seeking work situations in which they will be maximally free of constraint to pursue their professional or technical/functional competence.

Although other career anchors may exist, Schein has not been able to uncover them in his research to date. However, various research activities throughout the country are focusing on whether or not other career anchors exist.

Implications for the Educator

Both the professional educator and educational organization need greater insights into why individuals make the career decisions they do. The teacher who experiences organizational pressures which run contrary to his/her career anchor may find increased dissatisfaction not only at work but with the total environment.

One of the central issues is whether educational organizations have enough flexibility to meet the needs of individuals who have many different and varying career anchors. The typology of career anchors plays a significant role as organizations begin to focus on human resource planning and development. Neither individual satisfaction nor organizational effectiveness can be achieved if a strategy does not exist to meet those needs. An organization which focuses on human resource planning must not only be

concerned about organizational effectiveness, but individual effectiveness (Schein, 1978).

In relation to career planning Schein suggests the following:

> The dynamics of the matching process between individual and organization cannot be managed without more knowledge about: (a) individual life cycles and how self, career, and family development interact throughout those cycles; (b) the nature of organizational career dynamics, career paths, career stages, and other aspects of how organizations recruit, utilize, and manage their human resources; (c) the reciprocal interaction of individual and organization, the process of organizational socialization, and the process of individual innovation. (p. 244).

One phase of individual innovation is understanding models of career development. The dynamics of finding one's career orientation and finding a sufficient range of job challenges to determine one's orientation is crucial. Without insight into one's own career orientation the problems of mid and late career are more likely to be severe. If human resource planning is to be viewed as total system approach, then both the organization and the individual must be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the ongoing system.

Researchers speculate why the teacher burn-out transpires, the lack of career planning may be one area which is guilty. Teachers are given little guidance vis-a-vis why they have made the career decisions they have. More school districts will need to assist teachers in making sense out of their past and how that past influences future decisions.

Those involved with counseling teachers may also want to know more about mid life career dimensions. Training and development functions within educational organizations need relevant models to guide and encourage their employees to make the time of career decision-making a productive

time for both the organization and the individual. Since the organization is a complex system, one must consider how each subsystem can be managed towards optimum effectiveness. Greater understanding of the human element is only one facet of the organization system, yet a most crucial one (DeLong, 1977). Schein's career anchor model may add some structure in understanding the human component in educational systems.

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